The Anti-Politics
of Wild Desire, or,
Queer Nihilism

THE ANTI-POLITICS OF WILD DESIRE, OR, QUEER NIHILISM

1. Introduction and Orientation

My current project is a discussion of the wild as a political and ethical context for human behaviour and thought. It has been spawned by ten years of previous thought which, whilst it did not begin as being about anarchy, came to be entirely about it. In fact at first, back in 2016, I was simply thinking about being human and human being and asking what I am, what we are. It was this which led me to anarchy and to intense research about it over subsequent years. More recently, however, this has led me to think about the wild and wildness, something I equate in my thinking with anarchy as both an abstract and a material concept. In my last book I came up with another word for it – the wasteland. This was inspired by the Mad Max films of the Australian film maker, George Miller, which I discussed at length, imagining that the wasteland might have something to do with anarchy and with the ethics and anti-politics I was attempting to both describe and interpret. It was in that same middle part of my last book where I discussed Mad Max that I also wrote the following in an essay on pirates:

"'anarchy' is never going to be perfectly realised or appear in some pure and universal form because… its already happening and we are living in it. What you see around you is what we are making of the situation of the real anarchy (i.e. the Wasteland) that is simple existence as we know it. Anarchy, I have become convinced, is not a state of affairs people deliberately make, a forced political structure of the world, and, in fact, it continually escapes ever being so made. It then exists only in the direct action of living for yourselves and determining not to be controlled or constrained by others in any non-voluntary or non-cooperative way."

Here, I now subsequently see, I was already almost stumbling upon the wild and wildness, upon a necessary feralness. But I should have known better because for at least two decades before that I had been constantly fascinated by the ancient Greek Cynics who were exactly feral and all about what they called living “according to nature”. And I had written about them in my past work multiple times over. I write even more about them again in the current project. Yet the snippets of information we have about the Cynics ultimately act only as a goad to further study for even if we want to follow their example we must make it our own, recognising that the Cynics were acting in their own time and place – they had their own contextual reasons for living how they lived which have no need to be ours. They also beg many questions. For example, to live “according to nature” one must ask, and define, what one means by that. One then has to consider what it might mean to live “naturally”. In the current project I discuss “nature as a value” as opposed to merely a phenomenon. This brings me into contact with the Cynics again who, in basic terms, thought of nature as “simplicity”. If we take the Chinese people contemporaneous with them into account, by which I mean early Daoists, we come into contact with their very important concept “ziran” which can be translated as “nature” but also as “spontaneity”. Perhaps even more is revealed about this Chinese concept of nature when we learn that “ziran” has a basic meaning of “so of its own” or “self so”.

One should not think that my concentration on nature (which I actually prefer to call “the wild” in general) is one-eyed. I do not, for example, think that “civilisation”, which is often cast in the role of bad guy in my project, is opposite to nature. Rather, I attempt to imagine it as merely the natural differently (i.e. culturally) actualised. It may certainly be argued back and forth how beneficial, and to whom, this actualisation turns out to be. If we are being political and ethical then such questions must be asked. But something, by dint of being cultural, is not thereby automatically anti or non-natural. This, in fact, is

exactly where talk of “naturecultures” (such as that by Donna Haraway) I used in my previous book *Imagining / Queer / Anarchy* fits in. We must remember that language is a pragmatic tool for manipulating experience by means of concepts rather than that facility which represents reality in an accurate, fixed and corresponding way.

I make a few suggestions when considering nature “as a value” in my project. For example, consider the following:

“1. It tends towards diversity of life.
2. It is self-organising/self-actualising.
3. It seeks connection/interaction/cooperation.
4. It requires (i.e. results in) change and becomes a process of continual transformation.
BUT:
5. This is not a knowing process.
6. It is not teleological.
7. There is no purpose or intention.
8. Things simply do (and are left to do) what they are which, when becoming interactive, connective and relational, leads to more complex results and outcomes resulting in what we think of as “nature”. (Nature is what it does – it is the events-in-relationship.)”

Of course, its not as simple as this and my written project provides a lot of background text to get to such concise statements. I agree, for example, with Henry David Thoreau that “in wildness is the preservation of the world”. Thoreau was an American who was instinctively anti-government and fascinated by nature itself. The anarchist Emma Goldman saw in him a precursor of political anarchism. But how can I briefly summarise my view on nature as a context for what I want to say in what follows? Something like this:

Nature, for me, is and must be THE WILD. Why the wild? Because it is only in the wild where life receives its freedom (not least from moral coercion). The wild is not fluffy and cuddly, however, in case you think this naively romantic imagery. The wild can be harsh, cruel, merciless, vicious and completely uncaring (for that is its nature). But whilst that is true, it is also true to say that the wild is not systematic exploitation. It is not a world of forced economic and political and moral relations even if it does insist upon physical realities and necessities. It is a place of direct action and acting for yourself (or yourselves). It is a place of consequence and of autonomy, agency and free association. It is a place of self-determination and self-actualisation. It is a place for being oneself, going one's own way and being "so of its own" (ziran). The wild is not "civilisation", and should not be imagined as such, for in actuality it is civilisation's constant threat of change and a shadow over it portending transformation. The wild does not privilege one culture or species but provides the basis for many and diversifying examples of such things. Nature as a value, then, is THE WILD.

In the wild there is no authority. What there is is the imperative of life itself, that self-organisatory and self-responsible thing I have discussed before. The wild, in one sense, is simply everything living its life (and, inevitably, dying its death) simultaneously. The wild is a constant unfolding of life, time and space and its consequences. This is radically open-ended and radically free of moral prescription. What can happen may happen. In a sense, then, the value in "the wild" is TO KEEP THINGS THIS WAY or to have a prejudice for such wild liberty. The enemy of the wild, consequently, is centralising coercion or exploitation and this is why human beings especially come into focus as beings with power to enslave and destroy species and ecosystems and, frankly, to interfere and presume to control. (Nature is the power of destruction as well as of creation and holds no moral prejudice either way. This might motivate the insight that human beings can easily become nature's

alienation from itself in and through itself. It also makes any proclaimed “benevolence” in human coercion utterly irrelevant.) Alan Moore in his book *Swamp Thing* thought what he called “the way of the wood” was non-interference and I think that the way we honour that notion is by not seeing the wild as things to be commercialised or exploited or industrialised. Perhaps Buddhist avantgarde musician John Cage speaks for us all here when he insists, inspired by Eastern teachings, “You will only make matters worse”! The wild should be recognised as a greater phenomenon than ourselves, one we share with all biota which together create a habitable biosphere as the Gaia Hypothesis suggests. The wild is our context as anarchy is our context and both have ethical examples to teach us and ethical lessons to give.

What might those be? I don’t really want to be prescriptive about it. That is not a cop out. Its an example of what I am talking about by making nature’s value “the wild”. You must do the working out for yourself, make your own way, forge your own path, create your own life and its own values and alliances, live your own consequences (and everything else’s for none of us live in a vacuum). That is precisely “the wild”. The wild is the interdependence of independent things. The wild is the reality of diversity. The wild is a free network of relationships or a concatenation of co-becoming on a journey through time and space. The wild is that which exists transforming itself interactively. The wild is things being what they are. The wild is freedom from overarching deliberation. The wild is the possibility of, and struggle for, existence beyond coercion. As such, it cannot be prescribed. *It should not be prescribed*. It should be lived out and participated in and created. Continuously.

“The wild”, then, is very much a participatory and consequentialist understanding of nature as a value that seeks to interpret nature’s manner of operation. This, of course,

was also a Cynic desire. I imagine it a potentially endless intertwining of actions and energies, of wills and desires, that is both living things acting in self-organising ways for themselves but also, quite remarkably, in ways that produce an overall environment, situation, condition or effect that enables and maintains the whole. This is NOT an effect that is bound to happen in the sense that the effect is not arbitrary but consequent. Things could very easily be different and with much different consequences. If the arrangement of these elements was arbitrarily changed, or changed spontaneously too much, then a different outcome would emerge, one which might wipe all this away. The biologist Lynn Margulis' insight that life acts to preserve itself (and not just by itself but as a community of life in tandem, in and through all kinds of symbiotic entanglements and alliances) is then very important, as is the notion that life acts (autopoietically) in its own interest. Here that things are absolutely NOT organised from above by some inviolable law or guiding divine hand is of utmost importance – for the argument is that radical self-organisatory freedom, a liberatory nihilism, is what makes the wild the place, and the phenomenon, that it is.

The apparent stability of life on our planet over hundreds of millions of years has then been achieved, using political language, in and through an autonomous freedom and a liberty of agency in living things and material forces. It has produced a profound naturalness that is exactly "wild", feral, without the need for any overarching desire or the application of any controlling will or arbitrary reason. It has been based on independence AND interdependence in a situation where the two necessarily fit together and co-exist, an order and a chaos of being, things and events in relationship. Nature, the wild, is active. It is not passive stuff. It, in its myriad parts, has interests to pursue and consequence to both survive and to create. One can, in fact, imagine that the wild's justice, its ethical context, is simply CONSEQUENCE. This is to say that living things act in a freedom that is

devoid of overarching moral imperative but not without after the fact material consequentiality – for materiality simply is consequential. There, “Do what thou wilt” – as Aleister Crowley was fond of saying – but do so knowing that every action or inaction has its own consequences. These may be entirely unpredictable and unfathomable – there is nothing that says life should be an algorithm human reason can decipher and harness, a mathematical puzzle to be solved and used to one’s advantage. But they are authentic. And authenticity, as I have discussed before, brings us back to things which are “so of its own”, spontaneous, genuine and similarly authentic. Everything must reckon with consequences, as Moore’s Swamp Thing seemed in the end to conclude, and consequences appear as the wild’s way of teaching that anything with will, desire or power of action can do as it will – but that’s never the end of the story. In the end, then, the wild might simply be a story told to say “be what you are” and live what that brings in a world of consequence.

Anarchy, as the wild, is then “the situation”. It is things as they are with their desires, conditions and proclivities. It is the world always beyond “domesticating narratives” – which is to say ANY narratives even including this one of my own. It is a moment of nihilism but a nihilism that is liberating. It is a freedom that is potentially “growth to infinity” and that seems pertinent here too for, in freedom, the “going beyond” can never stop, never settle, never become established or institutionalised. For that is just more civilisation and domestication of the wild, more attempts to restrict wild freedom and set things in stone. So here is where my introduction and orientation ends, with libertarian nihilism, autonomy, freely evolving wild relations. There is no metanarrative to any of this. “The wild” – as an imaginary – is a void. Nothing. A wasteland. We are but actors cast upon its stage and if we want to survive for any length of time then, like Max Rockatansky, we have to ask ourselves what we are going to make of it – as well as how. Survive!

2. Queer Nihilism

In this next section of my presentation I want to imagine this situation as a queer nihilism. I already did this in my last book in Mad Max's Wasteland but here my references are other. Consequently, we now take a sharp turn into talking about sex. "Why sex?" you might wonder. Because there are a few pertinent terms and some pertinent discourse we have to make ourselves aware of here in terms of how we will live bearing in mind what has been said in my introduction about the wild, anarchy, the wasteland, the void which, in *Mad Max 3: Beyond Thunderdome*, is actually referred to as "The Nothing".

So I begin in a 1981 book called *Polysexuality*. We are here for Guy Hocquenghem's essay "To Destroy Sexuality" but the book itself, which has thirteen chapters discussing thirteen different types of sex, everything from self sex to bum sex to animal and child sex, each with equal candour, is worth perusing for its avantgarde approach to sexuality itself. The book is largely influenced by French theorists and its point seems simply to suggest that sexual desire is very much "poly" as a phenomenon. But it drops some key terms and ideas on the way. One of these is "libido", described by the book's editor as "an irrepressible will to pleasure". Libido, we learn after Sigmund Freud, "has no gender". But what about that "pleasure" just mentioned? The French word being translated as "pleasure" here is the very important word (for my thesis as much as that of *Polysexuality*) "jouissance". Jouissance is something of an untranslatable word, an unencapsulatable. It can mean pleasure. It can also mean enjoyment. Yet it can also be used to mean orgasm in French. It is a word attempting to describe a feeling of desire, something that is in reality strictly beyond words, beyond capture, and this is not the least important thing about it. In feminist theory, for example, I read that it describes "a form of women's pleasure or sexual rapture that combines mental, physical and spiritual aspects of female experience,

bordering on mystical communion." Psychoanalysis, after Jacques Lacan, links it with going beyond a more ordered form of pleasure so that it approaches pain and what he described as the aggression of the death drives. That works in the preamble to *Polysexuality* too for here the editor also links sex and death since, for some rigorous seekers, whatever jouissance is culminates in death, the ultimate sex – as those pursuing autoerotic asphyxiation, or reading the libertine novels of the Marquis de Sade, will understand well. Consequently, we have to keep a close eye on sex and death and their possible relations or interrelations. *Polysexuality*, then, is a book unafraid to explore sex and where sexual desire can take us. It is a book set in the wild, a book which insists it be free of civilisation's stifling moralistic attitude towards sex, that insists civilisation does not, and should not, define or classify, which means domesticate, desire. And that, from the perspective of civilisation, makes it dangerous. Its why it also has something to do with transgression. And perversion. But perversion, said Roland Barthes, "quite simply, is a way of being happy."

But let's get to what Guy Hocquenghem has to say in "To Destroy Sexuality" – an essay now regarded as one of the founding documents of Queer Theory. The first thing to note is that throughout this essay Hocquenghem seeds a few fragments which summarise his thesis. Putting them together you get:

"*To put an end to the slaughter of the body. To escape from the sedentary. To destroy sexuality. To get rid of programmed training. To liberate energies.*"

This seems both a wild and a queer thesis and, put briefly, In "To Destroy Sexuality" Guy Hocquenghem posits that both the body and its desires, which for him are the actually important things, are locked up in a deliberately incarcerating prison of material

relationships. The simple name for this prison of relationships is the first he uses in his first sentence: “the capitalist order”. For Hocquenghem this order, imagined as exactly a prison of relationships, frustrates, and is in formal opposition to, the body and its desire. No points for guessing which one Hocquenghem actually thinks should be victorious. The point, however, is that Hocquenghem starts from the point of view that the body and its desires should be free – in the wild sense I am wishing to propagate myself, in an anarchistic sense as I would call it – but that the capitalist state, which is authoritarian and coercive as of its nature, cannot allow this to happen since it is simply inimical to its own desire as a coerced system of relations. Thus, in Hocquenghem’s recitation, capitalism, as a system of relations, comes to see the body and its desires as an enemy or resisting entity to be tightly controlled. He puts it like this:

“*The capitalist state uses retention, stasis, scarification and neurosis to impose its norms and models, imprint its characters, assign its roles, promulgate its programs… It permeates our bodies, forcing its roots of death deep into our smallest crevices. It takes over our organs, robs us of our vital functions, mutilates our pleasures, harnesses all of our ‘life’ productivity under its own paralysing administration. It turns each of us into a cripple, cut off from his own body. A stranger to his own desires.*”

Hocquenghem makes the point repeatedly that the capitalist point of attack is precisely THE BODY and it is not insignificant that this includes its desires for material desire hardly actualises according to a logic of economic capitalisation all by itself. Desire, particularly sexual desire, simply wants what it wants in accordance with a pleasure principle – and it is certainly close kin to both madness and death in that. All can be imagined as prone to refusing to be kept within civilised bounds and norms. Is not the orgasm itself called “the little death”? Have you never dreamt or imagined being consumed entirely by that feeling

of sexual ecstasy beyond all reason and with no hope of finding your way back? It speaks of a liberty somewhere over the horizon and beckons us to go looking for it – a nihilistic liberty. But how to achieve it? Hocquenghem makes no bones about it: we must have a "revolutionary body" and that body must "generate its own freedom". Of this Hocquenghem says:

"*Here we find women revolting against the power that has been inseminated in their bodies for centuries; homosexuals revolting against the terrorising fascism of normality; adolescence revolting against the pathological authority of adults. They have begun, collectively, to open up the body's space to subversion and to open up the space of subversion to the 'immediate needs of the body'.*"

What is being put at odds here is a freedom of the body and its desire when contrasted with the incarceration and death of capitalist authoritarianism. The question is: Are our bodies our own in a wild freedom or are they things to be enslaved in a closed system of exploitative relations? Sexuality, for Hocquenghem was a gay man in the 1960s and 1970s when sexual liberty became an important social topic, comes to be a battleground for this. Here is where it starts to get interesting and where Hocquenghem's title – To Destroy Sexuality – becomes relevant. For, all Hocquenghem says being taken as read, there are numerous tasks here. Our very selves (formed, as they were, in and by the capitalist cultural and political forces Hocquenghem wishes to annihilate) must be transformed from within. This is something I have discussed at length in the past (influenced very much by *V for Vendetta*) as an aspect of anarchising ourselves (perhaps, in the current context, better described as "wilding" ourselves). We must escape from what Hocquenghem describes as "the sedentary" which sounds like the frozen death of capitalist relations. Again, this can be seen as an act of wilding. But we must also learn, so

it seems, to become bodies and beings of will and desire or, as Hocquenghem puts it, “cross the spaces of a limitless body; live in the willful mobility beyond sexuality, beyond the territory and repertory of normality.” This is an interesting description for it posits “sexuality”, in form and use, very much as a pattern – and necessarily a pattern one must not deviate from. (Every social conservative, or victim of a social conservative, should be familiar with this concept.) What’s more, it is clear it is “the capitalist order’s” pattern. It is the shape of our incarceration. Consequently, Hocquenghem can speak of “the vital need to free ourselves ‘together’ from the grip of the forces that oppress and repress our desires” and a “plan to take our personal, intimate life experiences and confront them, explore them, live them collectively." This will all be in contradiction of the pattern of “sexuality” – and to sexuality as a pattern.

This involves, however, not mere subversion, much less simple disobedience. According to Hocquenghem it requires not “simply breaking down this official sexuality as one would break down the condition of one’s imprisonment within any structure.” Rather:

“*we want to destroy it, to get rid of it because in the final analysis it functions as an infinitely repeating castration machine designed to reproduce everywhere and in everyone the unquestioning obedience of a slave.*”

These are strong words but Hocquenghem has more in regard to “sexuality” when he judges what it encourages is just as bad as what it denies and obstructs. For what it promotes in Hocquenghem’s view is:

“*the extension of ‘eroticism’ through advertising to all social life... (in order to) increase the efficiency of the ‘reproductive’ function of the official libido. Rather than reduce sexual*

discontent, these practices in fact extend the realm of frustration and 'lack' that facilitates the transformation of desire into a compulsive consumerism and guarantees the creation of demand."

Or, in other words, you get the "Only Fans-isation" of sex, sex as commodity for the consumer, sex as product, sex to order and off the shelf, the sex of interminable online forums where almost always men trade, swap, discuss and barter "sexual content". This is not a relationship determined by bodies and their desires in freedom but rather coerced and captured relations, relations of exploitation, replication and reproduction. The body is here no longer the source of desire but has been entranced and trained to reproduce the dictates of capitalism. Roll up, roll up! This does not reveal nor energise the body and its desires, it is not truly enabling or freeing. Rather, it hides it and proscribes the body and particularly those of its desires which seem out of bounds. It says how the body and its desires must be seen and what about them is, or is not, of value. Rather than autonomy, such in your face control produces slaves to the order of an economy. Henceforth, your pleasure shall be as those prescribed by "capitalist sexualities" and you must not deviate from this pattern. Hocquenghem, however, despises such "programmed training". He wants to "free, release, unfetter and relieve this living body so as to free all of its energies, desires, passions…" and to experience a "full complement of pleasure".

Fundamentally, Hocquenghem's argument leads us away from set gender and sexuality. He does not look for another kind of ideologically ossified person with a set gender and sexuality, one more classification of human being to be assimilated and set on the shelf beside the others in a classification system that capitalist authoritarianism and its biopolitics can use to control us. As his subsequent words indicate, he is imagining "mobile and multiple human beings", polymorphous sexual shapeshifters in a context of

grand intercourse, a rhizomatic diversity of human sexual experience and interaction. What today is called “fluidity”. This is important for it presents us with a new canvas against which to understand and contextualise our lives. It is one I suggest leads us into queer nihilism so it is pertinent I now turn to a book called *Journal of Queer Nihilism* which very much interacts with Hocquenghem’s work, both in “To Destroy Sexuality” but also in his major monograph, *Homosexual Desire*. It is in JQN that the queer part of this equation, essentially the work Hocquenghem did in “To Destroy Sexuality” in promoting the needs of the body and its desires over capitalist authoritarianism, is theorised as a negative or negating force IF IMAGINED POLITICALLY OR ETHICALLY. For what was Hocquenghem actually trying to do? First and foremost he wants to smash apart forever the capitalist and authoritarian system of relations in order that newer, wilder, freer relations may find space to exist. The collective Baedan who authored JQN take this work, process it, and say: “We are interested... in a praxis through which queer theory and queer revolt are fused in an elaboration of active nihilism, of anti-politics.” This is to say that queer is interpreted nihilistically for a political purpose (that purpose being anti-politics where politics itself is seen as inevitably leading to the unethical horrors Hocquenghem, as but one example, wished to negate).

As set out in JQN, Baedan argue that our situation is one in which the controlling forces can simply assimilate and utilise any positive ideology, movement or relation. And almost anything can be assimilated and domesticated in this way (not least queers as many assimilationist, and assimilated, queers can evidence). Here we see, of first importance, that queer is nothing so positively shallow as a “sexuality” (as Hocquenghem had already suggested and as he will do again in the theory of Baedan) – but it is ethical and political in general terms, this then motivating its negativity. Baedan themselves are clear that this

means “we define our anti-politics as refusing all political logic: representation, mediation, dialogue with power.”

More than the first half of *Journal of Queer Nihilism* is taken up with an extended and connected essay (in three parts) fleshing out this “queer nihilism”, its motivations and consequences. To do this it majorly interacts with queer theorist Lee Edelman’s book *No Future*, a book itself about queer negativity but one that is taken up only in order to push beyond its bounds and reveal Edelman himself as a limp academic liberal without the fire or the insight to really head out into the positively destructive void. From the third line of their text Baedan are clear that “queerness means the refusal of society and not any negotiation with or within it” (it is, I muse, like the wild in this) and so Edelman the academic can be sure that this means the end of his job pumping out what Baedan describe as “safe interpretations offered by the academy” (safe, that is, for academics, professors, and those who employ them, who must not become so agitated by their work that they get fired or otherwise curtail their careers). Baedan, to the contrary and not least in their use of Edelman’s *No Future*, “embark on an elaboration of queer negativity that means nothing less than the destruction of the civilized world.” What they seek is fuel for “anti-social projects”.

The point here is that, politically speaking, queer can become just another thing assimilated by power, something which is not a threat to it but simply just another thing colonised by it. We are talking Pride parades in which the police take part as active participants as an obvious example. The queerness of Baedan, however, is negative, destructive, and leads nowhere – for it must lead nowhere. Anywhere it could lead, so they theorise, could only be somewhere else the capitalists and the authoritarianism could colonise and control. So it must lead nowhere. It must be uncapturable as, for

example, also theorised by Hakim Bey with his Temporary Autonomous Zones which a friend of mine describes as “pop-up anarchy”. Queer is then not a positive social value but a destructive force. Thus, as Lee Edelman writes in *No Future* when interpreted by Baedan:

“*we are not interested in a social project of queerness, in queer contributions to society, in carving out our own ghettos within the material and symbolic structures of capitalist life. Rather, our engagement with queer theory must be attuned to locating the moments which reveal the potential undoing of society, its structures and its relations… Our daily life is so saturated and structured by capital that it is impossible to imagine a life worth living, except one of revolt.*”

Queer, then, must be negative, anti-society, as the society we live in judges it and can make use of it. It is then on a clear and deliberate collision course with it. This will be helped in that society itself has an inherently anti-queer, fascist thread running through it anyway which goes right back to the biblical idea of “Sodomites” as “symbol(s) of civilization’s decadence and imminent annihilation”. Such a society inherently hates diversity, let alone perversity, as of it own nature anyway. This becomes important to the argument when Lee Edelman discusses what he terms “reproductive futurity” and the importance of the symbolic child to this idea. This child, by the way, is definitely a symbolic child and it has little to do with actual children that actually exist for we can see with our own eyes how our actual leaders and the political and economic forces behind them treat such as those. In the argument of Lee Edelman in *No Future* the child is simply symbolic of the desire to endlessly proliferate and replicate exactly this society (hence “reproductive futurity”) and it is a matter of inculcating societal values and realities in and through such as these. As Edelman then puts it: “The Child must always name the horizon

and the beneficiary of every political project" for such a society and it is exactly this to which the queer nihilism I am discussing is to be opposed. Queer SHOULD be a threat to such a "civil order". It SHOULD threaten the heteronormative, patriarchal "reproduction of futurity". It SHOULD partake in "a liberatory conspiracy between the enemies of society". We should not want to in any way affirm, collaborate with, or assimilate with, any society which seeks, as of its DNA, to coerce and control us, exploit us, incarcerate us, use us as passive transmitters of its values, ethics and politics. We should not want status or representation within it. We SHOULD be committed entirely to its destruction and erasure. Queer and capitalism, queer and authoritarianism, cannot and SHOULD NOT go.

An interesting aside here. Edelman reports that "society", "civilisation", will be working to locate, categorize and assimilate, or otherwise neutralise, "the enemy within" that *No Future* identifies with "the death drive", a psychoanalytically explained "constant eruption of disorder from within the symbolic order itself", the "unnameable and inarticulable tendency for any society to produce the contradictions and forces which can tear that society apart." Baedan can also locate this idea in Foucault's work, noting that:

"*Foucault's work is foundational to queer theory in part because of his argument that power must create and then classify antagonistic subjectivities so as to then annihilate any subversive potential within a social body. Homosexuals, gangsters, criminals, immigrants, welfare mothers, transsexuals, women, youth, terrorists, the black bloc, communists, extremists: power is always constructing and defining these antagonistic subjects which must be managed. When the smoke clears after a riot, the state and media apparatuses universally begin to locate such events within the logic of identity, freezing the fluidity of revolt into a handful of subject positions to be imprisoned, or, more sinisterly, organized. Progressivism, with its drive toward inclusion and assimilation, stakes its hope on the social*

viability of these subjects, on their ability to participate in the daily reproduction of society. In doing so, the ideology of progress functions to trap subversive potential within a particular subject, and then to solicit that subject's self-repudiation of the danger which they've been constructed to represent. This move for social peace fails to eliminate the drive, because despite a whole range of determinisms, there is no subject which can solely and perfectly contain the potential for revolt. The simultaneous attempt at justice must also fail, because the integration of each successive subject position into normative relations necessitates the construction of the next Other to be disciplined or destroyed."

Consequently, the project Baedan describe in *Journal of Queer Nihilism* is one where they take on the part of the death drive (or "the persistent negativity of the death drive") consciously and as a matter of commitment. In this way they aim not to become the next project to be assimilated by the order of society – in which case their role would only be passed on to the next "Other". But this has consequences – and both Edelman and Baedan can draw them. One is that "queer" is not "an oppositional political identity" but rather "opposition to politics as the governing fantasy of identities". Another is that the "real strategic value" of queerness "lies in its resistance to (a) symbolic reality that only ever invests in us as subjects insofar as we invest ourselves in it" with all the fictions of governing, for example, that that also involves. This, according to Baedan, amounts to "a total refusal of attempts at the symbolic integration of our sexuality into governing and market structures" and "freedom that ultimately resides in nothing more than the capacity to advance into emptiness". This is a "non-identitarian, unrepresentable, unintelligible queer revolt" and is "purely negative". It is kin to an insurrectionary anarchy which aims at nothing positive but only wants to destroy that which incarcerates both it and everything else. It should be noted here that queerness has an in-built resistance to a society built on Edelman's "reproductive futurity" and centred on the symbolic child. This

is that it does not privilege heteronormativity or the heteronormative family unit. But it is also more than this – and in the recitation of Baedan should be. They say:

"*Queerness, beyond being the negation of the heteronormative family matrix, must also be practiced as a willful refusal of the political imperative to reproduce class society. In a world where all social relations are enchanted by our obligation to the Child as the future of the social order, we must break those communal relations and break the stranglehold of politics over our daily lives. Queerness must be an outside to politics, an antagonism against the political, or it isn't queer at all.*"

It is important at this point that we remember back to *Polysexuality* and "To Destroy Sexuality" which leads into Hocquenghem's fuller text, *Homosexual Desire*. We must ask what queer is and what it means. Baedan in JQN suggest it is "uncivilised desire", something which suggests "wild desire" instead. And if it is uncivilised it would make sense that the civilised want to hide and/or suppress it – and not least from that symbolic child which is the token of its reproduction and replication. Is this why, even today, the queer is held up as something to inspire horror and moral disgust? Is it why sex is hidden from children? Hocquenghem reasons that queer must be something that is revealing a wild reality that civilisation does not want to see – presumably because what is seen is inimical to its own project. Put simply, that is the wild ferality of reality in my book. Things can be other. Things can be whatever they can be. Civilisation is not necessary but has been forced into existence. Made. Created. And being so, it could be undone. But what is important in this is DESIRE. As Baedan then speak about this, after Hocquenghem, in JQN:

"*Desire, not specifically homosexual, is the tendency within society which also figures its undoing. Desire is the polymorphous and perverse overflowing that refuses to be captured*

within Oedipal reproduction or locked up in identity. Queerness, in its association with desire, names the negativity which is the nightmare of the social order. Desire, then, cannot be reduced to sexual attraction or orientation. Desire is a chaotic field which escapes representation, and so the repressive field of normative desire can only refer to it by the figures of those whose sexual practices are outside its matrix of intelligibility. The danger and fear associated with queerness are in relation to this unthinkability."

So queer here appears as an outside to those for whom an outside is an unthinkable horror, a beyond the walls of civilised probity, somewhere perhaps only populated by perverse barbarians who are prey to desire in an uncontrolled and uncontrollable form. One could then possibly envisage such desire as something rebellious or even something in open revolt (for it is in this imaginary certainly something that refuses control). From the perspective of heteronormative-capitalist incarceration, it is certainly something dangerous, something that leads into a seemingly uncontrollable and nihilistic void. The gay academic Jeffrey Weeks, in his introduction to the English translation of *Homosexual Desire*, connects this with "the activity of autonomous, spontaneous groupings, outside the social order" such as were not uncommon during the social unrest in Paris in May 1968 in which Hocquenghem himself played an active part. Such groupings, according to Weeks, are the "only" ones that can achieve "revolution" because they manifest "unalienated forms of radical social action" which are not "complicit with capitalism". This, suggests Weeks, is why Hocquenghem reifies those who are excluded from society (such as the figure of the homosexual) and the marginal for these are those who are ripe to produce social transformation. (As an aside, this thesis, it seems to me, is not totally unlike that Alan Moore concocts at the heart of *V for Vendetta* where it is a lesbian's radical authenticity that radicalises V and so motivates the whole story as a transformational possibility. "Become transfixed, become transfigured," says V to Evey.)

In such a thesis the queer (with an “anal” fascination that is symbolic itself) becomes a symbolic figure for an imaginary (and wild, organic) sociality just as “The Child” did previously for reproductive futurity – but it is a dark and dangerous anti-society figure that inaugurates something insurrectionary beyond identifying. (Could it be “the wild”?) Consequently (according to Hocquenghem):

“*The homosexual does not seek a peaceful and harmonious adjustment to society, and his effusive inclination... leads him along a path of ceaseless struggle. In short, the homosexual has not developed into a partner of human society. Here, human society means of course the Freudian model, in which homosexuality can only find a place according to the sublimated Oedipal mode. On the other hand, the homosexual points the way to another possible form of relationship which we hardly dare call society.*”

And this is the point for here the queer is being touted as an anti-political yet ethical figure, a model, if you will, for collective living. But the key to this understanding is wrapped up in the queer’s entanglement with the body and its desire. Consequently, Baedan interpret Hocquenghem in the following way:

“*Hocquenghem perfectly expresses the way in which desire is bound to a refusal of the future, a purely negative critique, and an anti-political praxis. Politics cannot rationally express why the motor car (or) the family are the same enemy of queerness. And yet, for us, it is abundantly obvious why these, and literally every other apparatus of modern society, must be annihilated. Lacking the means to express this destructive desire through politics, only an anti-politics can elaborate a process by which queer desire can be materialized against the physical arrangement of the social order. The car, the family, the school, the prison, the boutique, the surveillance infrastructure: each an expression of a civilization in*

the face of which our most potent desire is its annihilation. For him, the undoing of civilization must be linked to a movement based in the uncontrollability of desire."

On this reading "civilisation is the trap into which desire keeps falling" as is written in the infamous and banned French journal titled "Three Billion Perverts" from 1973. The figure of the homosexual, the queer, then seems a nihilistic, uncivilised figure because in the symbol of this figure with its unreproductive anal fixation that leads only to a brown hole to nowhere is the symbol of the end of civilisation. The queer is the end of reproduction and so the end of futurity. No more "Oedipal succession of generations" as French psychoanalytic theorists (and those others inspired by them) might have it. No anything but desire uncontrolled that leads us all to the eventual death of the species. So queer is "uncivilised desire", nihilism, feral wildness. But more than that, according to "Three Billion Perverts", "it is not the signifier of what might become a new form of social organisation, a new stage in civilised humanity". It is this aspect which shows up civilisation as the "trap" of desire for queer desire is neither on the side of life or death – it is, as I would now have it, ON THE SIDE OF THE WILD (which encompasses both life and death in a larger reality). And being on the side of the wild "it is the killer of civilised egos". But how to round this all up? Try the following from the *Journal of Queer Nihilism*:

"*(Here) is the vital link between the fantasy of futurity, the construction of the coherent self, and their intersection in reproductive futurism. To oppose reproductive futurism, and the reproduction of the social order through the endless succession of generations, is to signify the end of civilization as well as the subjects which comprise it. This destruction is to be found in the degeneration and disintegration of social structures into the queer formations which exist in constant pursuit of jouissance and without a care for the future. The proliferation of these queer autonomous groups does not prefigure a better world;*

these groupings of desire can only confront civilization as a negative, antipolitical, wild force… (Yet) Our queer position against civilization is not based on some notion of naturalness, eternally linked as we are to signifying the outside of any idealized natural order. Queers must always figure those types of unregenerative, non-productive beings which have no place in a natural order. Neither is our struggle to prove the legitimacy of, or attempt to naturalize, queerness. Nature itself is a disciplinary category of civilization used to define and classify wild life. Instead, as (trans academic and activist Susan) Stryker insists, we'll ally ourselves with the 'chaos and darkness' from which nature spills forth. This chaos and darkness, being the same unintelligible force which Hocquenghem calls homosexual desire, which Edelman calls the death drive. We locate ourselves in the spilling forth of the same chaos which promises civilization's undoing."

3. Desire vs Politics

That was quite a lot to pack into what aims to be a concise presentation but, taking it onboard and moving swiftly to my conclusion, the political and ethical desire is then to create other lives, a diversity of lives, rebellious and disobedient lives, a situation in which lives cannot be centrally determined by incarcerating civilisation or its institutions, bearing in mind that our own current Home Secretary and Birmingham MP, Shabana Mahmoud, openly masturbates in front of Tony Blair to the thought of permanent and total surveillance of every British citizen and is totally unashamed of doing this in public. The key to this negating revolt, I am persuaded, is once again desire – often best exampled by its most potent example, sexual desire. Yet desire, of course, is a personal thing so this is never a matter of me, or anyone else, telling you what to do. That, in fact, is of course the point: to live lives in which no one can tell you what to do, to live lives in which we cultivate the feral ability *to tell ourselves* what to do. Here the wild and anarchy

find a common value in taking responsibility for ourselves, in propagating desire. This is why I think Felix Guattari, regular past collaborator with Gilles Deleuze and the editor of the banned and destroyed French journal *Three Billion Perverts*, speaks about queer as "libidinal disruption in society" and "revolutionary desiring-energy". Such language, which Guattari indicates is tied up with diverse sexuality as not merely of sexual but also political consequence, sets us off in a direction marked out in the past by revolutionaries such as the Marquis de Sade or his countryman, Charles Fourier, the latter a socialist and sexual libertarian who invented the term "feminism" since he believed in sexual equality. Fourier, in fact, actually inspired the formation of various temporary colonies or intentional societies whereas Sade has inspired sexuality beyond civilised moral and political borders (as I am sure he would have been delighted to do).

Yet, as I say, the heart of this is desire and desire, so Guattari and others said in *Three Billion Perverts*, should be at the heart of politics as an ethics. (Yes, desire as a wild and biological ethic.) Desire as sex is then a political and not just a sexual matter. As Hocquenghem and others put it, queer desire is not just a matter for queers but ends up being a queering of desire itself and so a matter of desire and of politics simply put. Put this another way, as the Movement for the Liberation of Women did in France in the 1970s when Hocquenghem and Guattari were about their homosexual work, lesbianism is not only a form of struggle against male chauvinism, it is a questioning of the field of sexuality itself. As Guattari then draws the conclusion to this in *Three Billion Perverts*:

"*Homosexuality would be, thus, not only an element in the life of each and everyone, but involved in any number of social phenomena, such as hierarchy, bureaucracy, etc. The question has thus been shifted: homosexual men and women refuse the status of an oppressed minority, and intend to lead a political offensive against the enslavement of all*

forms of sexuality to a system of reproduction, and to the values of bureaucratic, capitalist and socialist societies. This is, in fact, more about transsexuality than homosexuality: at issue is the definition of what sexuality would be in a society freed from capitalist exploitation and the alienation it engenders on all levels of social organization. From this perspective the struggle for the liberty of homosexuality becomes an integral part of the struggle for social liberation."

Guattari's logic is unfailing here for in historical context he is talking about the fact that his edited journal *Three Billion Perverts* was seized for being grossly offensive and morally corrupting, ordered destroyed by a court and he hauled before that same court in order to defend its publication. What Guattari gets at here is the notion that redefining sexuality (which must include gender and gender expression in a gender-sexuality matrix or combination) redefines *the whole field of social relations* and so both society and the individual themselves – and all that relies on them! Such questioning puts *everything* in question, each and every social relation and institution. And so of course the reaction to *Three Billion Perverts* is political (rather than merely moral) because it cannot be anything else. The content of the journal (and, not least, that in it people speak for themselves baldly and with some vulgarity) is putting the politics of society in question and even finding it entirely arbitrary, false, unnecessary, damaging, prejudiced, partisan, etc. And so Guattari, commenting on the case of *Three Billion Perverts* some years later, can add:

"*We think that the expression of desire is synonymous with disorder and irrationality. But the neurotic order that forces desire to conform to dominant models perhaps constitutes the real disorder, the real irrationality. It is repression that makes sexuality shameful and sometimes aggressive. Desire that can open itself up to the world ceases to be destructive and can even become creative. This trial is political. It makes a cause of a new approach to*

daily life, to desire, and the new forms of expression that have irrupted since 1968. Will we finally allow people to express themselves without having recourse to 'representatives'? Will we allow them to produce their own journals, their own literature, theatre, cinema, etc.?"

Guattari concludes this by describing those who created *Three Billion Perverts* as those speaking for themselves and as those speaking to "another order that seeks to build another world". And this is precisely the political issue in a nutshell: YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO IMAGINE, MUCH LESS CREATE, ANOTHER WORLD! What *Three Billion Perverts* crudely examples is then that when people focus on their bodies, their desire, their libido, a vast well of creative (and destructive) energy is tapped, wild energy – a kind that might easily change the world. No wonder then, of all subjects, that sex is the one most obsessively policed. In unintelligible, uncontrollable jouissance is the continual recreation and transformation of the world, a wild world of no metaprojects, no ultimate goals and no overarching and centralising control. That is the wild. That is anarchy. That is an ethics and an anti-politics. Desire that goes nowhere but that takes responsibility for itself versus a politics that only ever wants to control you, that is control simply put. The wild versus civilisation. Only in desire is the possibility of *new* relations.

What those new relations will be, what they will consist of, how they will be made, is up to us. That is the reality of the wild in a wasteland. Lately I have been thinking on what the films in the 28 Days, now Years, Later franchise says about this. They suggest that in such a queer and negating void as I have described, a post-apocalyptic world like ours, a genuine response can be to care, to love, to act with concern beyond ourselves. Not, now in my terms, because of a moral imperative or a command or an obligation but because we can, because we choose to, because it is authentic. Because being such creates new, wild and desired relations "so of its own". That is something worth thinking about.